NESQLUG NEWS
The Journal of Record of
New England Sinclair QL User Group
Vol III, No 1
"A Beacon to Guide the Wandering Sojourner Home from the Abyss of Confusion"

EDITOR'S NOTES

As we start the third year of NESQLUG there is good news and bad news.

The good news is that the QL is alive and well, although there is genuine concern that support in North America is waning. Computer Monthly is said to be dropping it's T/S column, our intrepid librarian suffers from the malaise of over-extending himself and the number of NESQLUG members who have requested material from the 90+ disk IFE library can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The good news is that QL World is alive and well, IQLR reports a high rate of subscription renewal, the majority of which is now overseas, there is talk of a new North American vendor arriving on the scene. (Hush, hush.), Sir Clive is back in business trading again as Sinclair Research and it is reported that there are now two operating systems that are Q-DOS compatible but are sufficiently non-Q-DOS that Amstrad doesn't object. There may be life in black beauty yet.

However, if NESQLUG is to survive as a viable organization it requires participation of its members. All members can help by contributing articles or programs. PLEASE DO IT.

The NESQLUG NEWS is the Journal of the New England Sinclair QL User Group. It is published bi-monthly.

Annual membership is $10.00 (students $5.00) in North America. The rest of the world - $15.00 air mail.

We meet monthly on the first Saturday of odd-numbered months and the first Sunday of even numbered months. If that's a holiday weekend, we meet the following weekend.

NEXT MEETINGS

NESQLUG meets from 11:00 pm to 4:00pm, Saturday, July 11, at the home of Al & Dorothy Boehm, 33 Selfridge Road, Bedford, MA. Call (617) 275-1097 for directions. Come at noon for coffee and set up.

In August it meets for the second annual blastout at Bill Cable's in Cornish NH on the weekend of 7/31 to 8/2. Sunday topic: PROD demonstration of milking a cow with a QL.

Our exchange policy is simple: we-send-you-ours-if-you-send-us-yours (WSYOIYSUY) and you have something to say about the QL.

Please forward exchange issues to Mike Jonas, 1691 Cambridge St. #21, Cambridge MA 02138.

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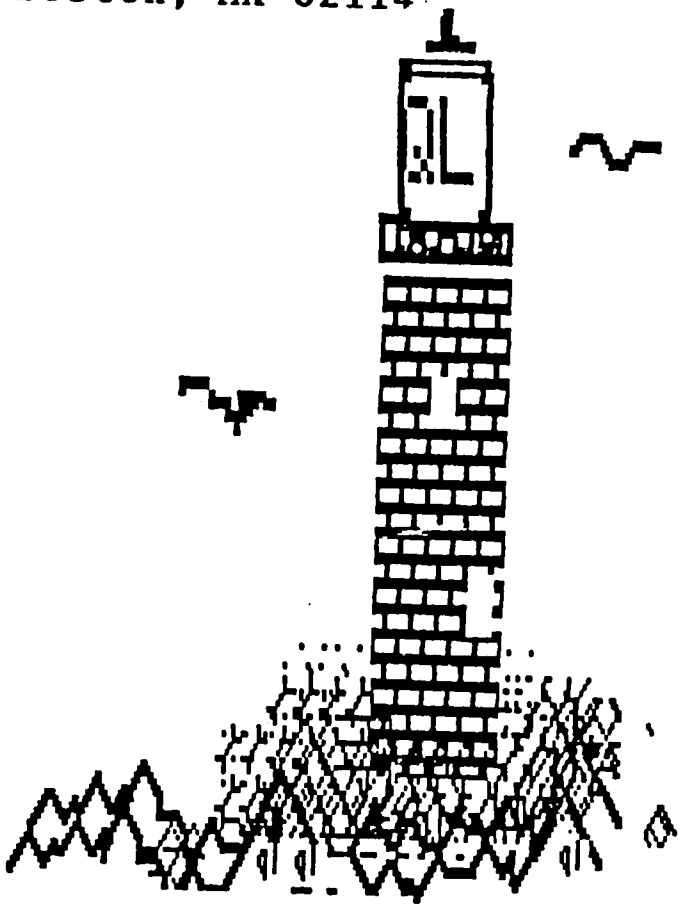

FIRST CLASS MAIL

To:

To: TIMES NEWS CATUG NITE- 85
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July/August 1992
NESQLUG Newsletter

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LETTER
from the Disk Librarian

July approaches and with it the election of NESQLUG pooh-bahs for the fiscal year 92-93. Due to an overall lack of interest in the NESQLUG Software Library, your Librarian has decided to call it quits and will be vacating the position. There are, however, a few loose ends which he would like to tidy-up before retiring.

There is still space available for programs on Disk #3. Anyone wishing to donate software to the Library is advised to, please, do it now. That's - N O W !!!!! Thanks.

If anyone has had problems with any of the software on Disks #1 & #2, I would very much appreciate being made aware of it so that, if possible, corrected versions may be included on Disk #3.

The primary reason for compiling a Library was to help (re)engage NESQLUG members with aspects of their QL's that they might not ordinarily be using or aware of.

That was certainly true in my case. In putting the Library together, I feel that I learned more about computing in a year than I would have, puttering along as I had been, in five.

I hope that the individuals who were motivated enough to contribute programs were similarly rewarded. That was, after all, the idea. My sincere thanks once again to those members who keyed-in and/or contributed original software to the Library or loaned me copies of their magazines.

Since Peter has sent our Library to the IFE for inclusion in their (rather immense) Freeware Library, it's possible that interested QLer's in other parts of the world may look over and find a use for some of the 100+ programs which we have put together over the past two years.

I'd like to say in leaving that I truly enjoyed the two hundred plus hours I spent working on the Library. I'd like to, but that wouldn't really be the truth. I can honestly say, however, that I am pleased to have learned so much from the process.

Ed Kingsley

EMULATORS
by Peter Hale

We have received news of several Sinclair-Timex emulators being developed in Holland by Carlo Delhez.

I have left his initial letter to speak for itself on pages 5 and 6 so I will add nothing to it except to report that there are three emulators: two for the ZX-81 on the QL and on MS-DOS and one for the Spectrum on the QL.

The programs are in continuing development and there is a shareware price that involves regular upgrades of the programs for 50 Dutch Guilders per program. If you send US$ (roughly $25.00), please add $15 for the currency conversion charges his bank imposes.

I wrote him first that I was perplexed as to how cassette tapes or any of the multitude of disk formats were to be read by a QL.

He replied that for the ZX-81 he has written a ZX-81 fileserver for the QL (software from him about $10.00, plus about $10.00 for parts for a DIY RS232 interface to the QL drives). A similar fileserver is in development for MS-DOS.

(Continued over)

For the Spectrum life is easier. A registered copy of the Spectator comes with file conversion utilities to transfer Spectrum disks to QL disks. Beta, Disciple, Opus and Microdrive are supported operating systems. Whether any of these is similar to various operating systems in use here, I do not know. It also emulates the serial port of the ZX Interface 1, so transport is also possible.

As I have no knowledge of the various hardware requirements of the ZX-81 and the Spectrum, I cannot help with technical details.

This article is a good faith effort to report the essence of Mr. Delhez's reply and the accompanying letter must speak for itself.

Please share this information with dedicated T/Sers who may benefit.

QL WORLD LIVES

by Peter Hale

QL WORLD is publishing again. It was purchased by ARC WIND, LTD., an owner of specialty magazines previously best known for publishing a wind surfing magazine.

Just where QL WORLD fits into wind surfing I don't know. Perhaps there is a feeling (heuristically speaking) that a QL with PROD extensions could be mounted on a surf board with an embedded sensor pad to achieve heretofore unheard of feats of daring in wind surfing!

The important part is that Subscriptions and Editorial offices are:

QL WORLD
ARC WIND, LTD
The Coachhouse
Medcroft Road
Tackley, OXON OX5 3AH

For the uninitiated, OXON is to OXFORD somewhat as MA is to Massachusetts, only the Brits use the abbreviation of the Latin for OXFORD. Who said you never learned anything useful from NESQLUG NEWS?

plus4 REVIEW

by Hugh Bowie

Plus4 is not a Desktop Publisher but probably the nearest you will get in a Word Processor. It is a most remarkable program. It is fast, easy to use and very complete.

To start with, **plus4** is said to not need a manual, but be sure that the manual does help. The Menus are excellent, but the manual still helps understand what is going on.

To go back to the beginning of my acquaintance with **plus4**:

I was, I think, one of the first to get this program. The version 1 that I received had a serious fault inasmuch as the program had a tendency to crash with the last line/word erased.

I wrote Software87 and shortly received version 2. This is the program I refer to from now on.

Version 2 corrects all the faults of version 1 and is a pleasure to use.

The manual is good. It is described as a learning tool to help you learn how to use **plus4**. I would have liked to see a better index and perhaps a glossary of the special terms coined for unique features. However, I made my own index from the manual while using the program and learned from that experience.

Plus4 is the sequel to **text87**. (Why **plus4**? **text87** plus 4 = **text91**.) Although **text87** was good, it took a long time to get to know. From the novice's point of view, plus4 will be easier to learn.

It's easier because there is a Quill-like interface with the same function keys doing roughly the same as in Quill, but with more flexibility.

If it is at all harder, it is because there are so many more features than you ever dreamed of that sheer numbers can be overwhelming.

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One example is that it is possible to have up to eight - count 'em eight - separate documents at once in **plus4**. With less than eight it is possible to open several windows over different parts of a document at once, all on the same screen.

Yet at the same time the novice needs nothing more than the defaults to begin being productive.

The first thing is to get it going and this is not too bad as there are plenty of Founts and Printer Drivers to select from. There is bound to be one to suit your particular set-up and taste.

There are no translates to trouble you - they are in the drivers. Program configuration is simplicity. Software87 designed **plus4setup** that virtually does it for you. Once set, you can forget about it.

When the time comes to load a program, pressing the down arrow opens a window with a list of loadable/importable files on the default save disk. Use the up/down arrows to select a file and <ENTER> loads it for you. Neat, huh?

The same applies to saving a file so you can select a suitable title or modify the name of an existing one.

The menu appears on the top of the screen, but can be moved to the bottom if prefered. The menu always reminds you what stage of action you are at and what possible parameters are for an operation. If you are unsure of a choice to make, the F1 key opens a window to the relevant section of the HELP file.

Before you are ready to print a document, you can preView its shape and layout on the screen.

text87 and **plus4** use Layout to describe the physical dimensions of the footer, header text body and number of columns on the paper.

In the past, and with Quill and most other word processors, the entire document was set to a single layout. **plus4** can have multiple layouts in the same document, so that a range of page formats can be included in a single document.

Most of us have an idea of how we want a document to appear. Once it is typed, you may set the Layout. After setting the Layout and saving the document, the text can be Zapped, retaining the document layout and rulers. This in turn can be saved as a Style File to load when preparing a similar document.

As with Quill, **plus4** keeps track of the number of words and the page number. It also reports the line number where the cursor is.

Changing typefaces within a document is only a few keypresses away. Keypresses, because there are so many more options with a modern printer than with Quill. And the system to achieve that is very easy.

Search and replace are very quick - so quick that the answer is on the screen before the finger leaves the key. And now you can search forward <u>or</u> backward from any point in the document. The search can be case-sensitive or not as you choose.

I am sorry that I cannot tell you all about this program in a couple of pages when the manual takes 56.

All I can say is that if you wrute a lot or you care about document appearance, **plus4** is for you. If you like versatility and speed (Wow! You don't need a Gold Card to be impressed with the speed) and ease of operation, then this is for you.

text87plus4 is stocked in the U.S.A. by EMSoft, Box 8763, Boston MA 02114-0037 (1-617) 889-0830. The price is $139.95 with nine-pin printer drivers, Qtyp dictionaries in four languages and a monster English dictionary that can spell American.

Steenbergen, 1st of May, 1992.

New England's Sinclair QL Users Group,
P.O. Box 8763,
Boston,
MA 02114 USA.

Dear Sir,

From a friend of me, I heard about your Sinclair QL users group. I find it very pleasing to know that people are still interested in this terrific Sinclair machine, despite the huge popularity of MS/DOS nowadays. Also in Europe, many Sinclair user groups are doing a great job in keeping the serious users united.
I myself have been working on a ZX81 (Timex TS 1000) since 1982, on a QL since 1987 and on an MS/DOS computer since 1991. Although the QL and MS/DOS machine are obviously much more sophisticated than the good-old ZX81, I still consider it great fun to work on my ZX81.
I am writing you this letter because I have developed three programs which the readers of your magazine may find rather interesting. These three programs are so-called emulators. An emulator running on computer A is designed to simulate an entirely different computer B at lowest level, i.e. the entire processor instruction set and hardware ports of computer B are emulated properly by computer A. The emulators I am developing are:

- **XTricator**: a fully compatible Sinclair ZX81 emulator for the Sinclair QL (emulates a 64k ZX81 with the unique QZDOS (includes subdirectories); supports ZX81 high resolution; it's multitasking, window manager & pointer interface compatible; speed: about 35% of original ZX81 in SLOW on a 8 MHz 68008-based QL, up to 200% on a 16 MHz 68000-based QL)

- **Spectator**: a fully compatible Sinclair ZX Spectrum emulator for the Sinclair QL (emulates a 48k ZX Spectrum with Interface-1 and comes

complete with various disk conversion utilities; it's multitasking, window manager & pointer interface compatible; speed: about 35% of the original ZX Spectrum on a 16 MHz 68000-based QL, 55% on a 24 MHz 68000-based QL)

- **XTender**: a fully compatible Sinclair ZX81 emulator for MS/DOS machines (emulates a 64k ZX81 with the unique QZDOS; also supports ZX81 high resolution; speed: from 60% on an 8 MHz 8088-machine up to 900% on a 33 MHz 386dx-machine, and beyond)

Note that these are non-commercial products. I am distributing the programs as ShareWare. People who are interested can get a try-out version against cost price (viz.: two 3.5" DS/DD brand disks for XTricator, four for Spectator and two for XTender). Official registration amounts to Hfl. 50 per program (approx. $ 25, but I prefer checks in Dutch Guilders only).
The three emulators are already operational and have been tested with hundreds of existing ZX81 and Spectrum programs (mostly commercially marketed programs in machine code).
Instead of summing up the full specifications of the programs here, I first would like to ask you if you are indeed interested in these programs. If so, I could send you an article about one or all of the programs for publication in your magazine. If you wish, I can also send you a copy of the programs so that you can test them yourself and write an article about them in your magazine. In all cases, I would appreciate getting a reply from you at your earliest convenience,

Yours Faithfully,

Carlo Delhez,
Emmastraat 3,
4651 BV Steenbergen,
Netherlands.

ZXIR QLIVE ALIVE
by Peter Hale

Apologies to Bob Swoger and Don Lambert for pinching the name of their magazine, but it fits the bill.

The July, 1992, Popular Science, reports on Sir Clive Sinclair's latest gadget, the electric Zike Bike, a 24 pound, Ni-cad battery powered bicycle with a top speed of 15 mph. Cruising range is an hour, more using the pedals. Recharge time is also an hour. Price about $870.00.

The interesting part is that Sir Clive is back trading as Sinclair Research from 15/16 Margaret St., London W1N 7LE, England.

Thus it seems that Amstrad's sole rights to the Sinclair name have finally expired and Sir Clive can reclaim the use of his famous name.

Q-DOS to you, Sir Clive!

Two Tips
(Hardware Division)
by Peter Hale

Although disks are far more reliable mediums than microcartridges, who among disk drivers has not had the dreaded **Bad Medium** error message after trying to load/save a file?

The first time that happens, you curse the computer. The second time you curse yourself that you hadn't followed the principal of **ALWAYS MAKE A BACKUP.**

Bad Medium error message generally means one of two things occured. Either the Directory track on the disk or one or more parts of the file track in question has been damaged. Golf shoes are one offender, but everything from errant magnetic fields to dust particles can be the problem.

TIP ONE: Not all **Bad Medium** messages are created equal, but the QL thinks they are.

I discovered this after much cursing and drive head cleaning and some reformatting when my boot disk generated this message each time I first powered up for the day.

The solution has been to insert another disk in the drive, run a directory on it, then use the disk attempted first.

It seems that my drive one is a bit cranky when woken in the morning (or any time of day for that matter.) Tony Tebby himself would get a **Bad Medium** message.

However many times the first disk is tried without changing disks, the QL remembers the **Bad Medium** message. It won't forget until it looks at another disk and makes a decision about it.

TIP TWO: Ever had your computer crash leaving one or more drives spinning and the light on until you pull the plug?

When you re-power, you discover that the disk has been wiped clean. Being a good housekeeper you curse mildly (this time) because you have made a backup and the whole thing is just a slight inconvenience.

[Frequent crashes of this sort can be a symptom of deteriorating circuits in your QL, but occassional ones are part of computing life.]

However, before reformatting the entire disk, try saving a test file to it. If the file takes, all that may have happened is that just the directory track was deleted.

If the test file takes, then you should be able to copy the backup onto the original disk.

An interesting thing will happen. Instead of your test file being at the top of the directory, it will appear at the bottom, as all the other files reclaim their former order in the directory! Any one know what is really happening?

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